



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE STROPHICAL ORGANIZATION OF HEBREW TRIMETERS.

BY PROF. CHARLES A. BRIGGS, D. D.,

Union Theological Seminary, New York.

An absence in Europe for eight months prevented me from continuing the series of articles on Hebrew Poetry, begun in the *HEBRAICA* in April, 1886, until the present time. In the first article I presented some specimens of the trimeter movement, with a study of the lines and their interrelation in the varied forms of Parallelism. I now purpose to consider the strophical organization of the trimeter poems. The strophes are sometimes marked externally by the initial letters of the strophes being in alphabetical order, or by refrains. But in most cases, the strophical organization can be determined only by a careful study of the poem, with reference to the breaks in the sense and emotion, and of the parallelism of the sections on a larger scale. There is great freedom and variety in the strophical organization.

1) The simplest strophe is the distich. We have an example of this in the alphabetical Psalm xxxiv.

אברכה את-יהוה בכל-עת
תמיד תהלתו בפי
ביהוה תתהלל נפשי
ישמעו ענוים וישמחו
גדלו ליהוה אתי
ונרוממה שמו יחדו
דרשתי את-יהוה וענני
ומכל מגורותי הצילני
הביטו אליו ונהרו
ופניהם אל יחפרו
זה-עני קרא ויהוה שמע
ומכל צרותיו הושיעו

These six strophes sufficiently illustrate the movement. The strophes continue through the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. There is one letter omitted, namely, the ך that should come in between ה and ז. There is also an additional

strophe at the end with פ. This shows that the original poem has been changed by omission and addition in these two instances, and opens our eyes to look for other similar modifications of Hebrew poems where the alphabetical structure does not aid us to determine them. These lines are all trimeters except the first in the strophe with ף. The tetrameter here seems to be designed to make an antithesis between the calling and the answering.

2) We have a specimen of a trimeter poem with strophes of four lines in the prayer Psalm III.

I.

יהוה מה-רבו צרי
רבים קמים עלי
רבים אמרים לנפשי
אין ישועתה-לו באלהים

II.

ואתה יהוה מגן-בעדי
כבודי ומרים ראשי
קולי אל-יהוה אקרא
וענני מהר קדשי

III.

אני שכבתי ואישנה
הקיצותי כי-יהוה יסמכני
לא-אירא מרכבות עם
אשר-סביב שתו עלי

IV.

קומי הושיעני אלהי
כי-הכית את-כל-איבי לחי
שני רשעים שברת
ליהוה הישועה על-עמך ברכתך

At the close of strophes I. and II. the Massoretic text gives סלה. This is thought by some to mark strophical divisions at times. I do not believe this. These strophes are so arranged that the second is antithetical to the first and the fourth to the third. But the strophes are really in introverted parallelism, in that the two middle strophes are antithetical to the strophes that begin and close the prayer. The lines are trimeters with the exception of the initial and the concluding lines of the last strophe. Here the movement is changed to the tetrameter in the last line, in order that it may become more deliberate and quiet at the end,

expressing the firm confidence of the Psalmist in his God. But we can see no reason for a change to the tetrameter movement in the first line. Accordingly we have stricken out the **יְהוָה** which is unnecessary to the thought and really out of place in the rhythm. We have found a large number of examples in Hebrew poetry and prophecy in which divine names have been inserted by later editors who did not understand the rhythm. It is also probable that the relative **אֲשֶׁר** in the closing line of the third strophe is such a prosaic addition. It may be combined with **כִּבִּי** by Maqqeph, but it is more commonly omitted in Hebrew poetry.

3) Psalm CXLVIII. gives us an example of strophes of six lines.

I.

הללו את־יהוה מן־השמים
הללוהו במו מרומים
הללוהו כל מלאכיו
הללוהו כל צבאו
הללוהו שמש וירח
הללוהו כל כוכבי־אור

II.

הללוהו שמי השמים
והמים אשר־מעל השמים
יהללו את־שם יהוה
כי־הוא צוה ונבראו
ויעמידם לעד לעולם
חק נתן ולא־יעבור

III.

הללו את־יהוה מן־הארץ
תנינים וכל תהמות
אש וברד שלג־וקיטור
רוח־סערה עשה דברו
ההרים וכל גבעות
עץ־פרי וכל ארזים

IV.

החיה וכל בהמה
רמש וצפור כנף
מלכי־ארץ וכל לאמים

שרים וכל שפטי-ארץ
בחורים וגם בתולות
זקנים עם נערים

V.

יהללו את-שם יהוה
כי-נשגב שמו לברו
הודו על-ארץ ושמים
וירם קרן לעמו
תהלה לכל חסידיו
לבני-ישראל עם קרבי

This is a Hallelujah Psalm indicated by its appended title **הללויה**. There can be no doubt that there is a division at the third strophe, where there is an antithesis between

הללו את-יהוה מן-השמים

and

הללו את-יהוה מן-הארץ

This would seem to divide the Psalm into two parts. There is, however, manifestly another strophe, beginning with

יהללו את-שם יהוה

This last strophe has but six lines. It therefore seems necessary to break the previous parts in two, if the strophes are to be uniform. Such a break is given in the first part by rising to the more general statement in the

הללוהו שמי השמים

and in the second part by passing over to the animal kingdom.

Furthermore, the last strophe is as closely related to the second part, as the second strophe is to the third part. For in the third line of the second strophe we have

יהללו את-שם יהוה

followed by the reason

כי-הוא צנה ונבראו

and it is evident that the first and second lines are in parallelism with them :

יהללו את-שם יהוה
כי נשגב שמו לברו

Thus the Psalm is composed of two parts, with two strophes in the first and three in the second. It is of the nature of the hymn thus to swell in ascriptions of praise.

One modification of the text seems to be necessary. The second line of the Psalm is a dimeter if we read **במרומים**, but I can see no propriety in such a

dimeter here. It is probable that we should separate the **ב** and write it after the poetic style **בְּמוֹ** and so get the third beat of the accent.

4) We have an example of a strophe of seven lines in Psalm II. We shall give the two strophes of the first part :

I.

למה רגשו גוים
ולאמים יהגו ריק
יתצבו מלכי ארץ
ורוזנים נוסדו יחד
על-יהוה ועל-משיחו
ננתקה את מוסרותימו
ונשליכה ממנו עבתימו

II.

יושב בשמים ישחק
ארני ילעג למו
אז ידבר אלימו
באפו ובחרונו יבהלמו
ואני נסכתי מלכי
על-ציון הר קדשי

The second strophe is here antithetical to the first strophe. This antithesis is complete, extending through every line but the fifth, which is omitted in the second strophe. It seems to us clear that the original poem has been mutilated by the omission of this line which ought to have given the **גוים ומלכי ארץ** as the antithesis to **על יהוה ועל-משיחו**. It would seem that this latter line is a dimeter in order to make a pause of a single beat before giving the words of rebellion. The Massoretes have incorrectly arranged the third and fourth lines of the second strophe by attaching **באפו** to the third line and thus making the fourth line a dimeter. There would be a sufficient reason for this if it was the original line preceding the words of Jehovah to the rebels, but this is probably not the case. Furthermore, the rhyme is preserved if we make the three lines close with **למו**, **אלימו**, and **בְּמוֹ**. The Hebrew poet is fond of rhyming through a few lines, as here; but he does not care to carry it on to any great length.

5) Psalm XLIX. gives us strophes of eight lines.

I.

שמעו זאת כל-העמים
האזינו כל-ישבי חלד

גם בני-אדם גם-בני-איש
 יחד עשיר ואביון
 פי ידבר חכמות
 והנות לבי תבונות
 אטה למשל אזני
 אפתח בכנור חידתי

II.

למה אירא בימי-רע
 עון עקבי יסובני
 הבטחים עלי חילם
 וברב עשרם יתהללו
 אח לא-פרה יפרה-איש
 לא-יתן לאלהים כפרו
 ויקר פריון נפשם
 וחדל לעולם

III.

ויחי עוד לנצח
 לא יראה השחת
 כי-יראה חכמים ימותו
 יחד-כסיל ובער יאברו
 ועזבו לאחרים חילם
 קרבם בתימו לעולם
 משכנתם לדור ודר
 קראו בשמותם על-אדמות
 { ואדם ביקר בל-ילין } Refrain.
 { נמשל כבהמות נדמו }

IV.

זה-דרכם כסל למו
 ואחריהם בפיהם ירצו
 כצאו לשאול שתו
 מות-ירעם וצורם לבלות
 שאול מזבל לו
 וירדו-בם ישרים לבקר

אך-אלהים יפרה נפשי
מיד שאיל כי-יקחני

V.

אל-תירא כי-יעשר איש
כי-ירבה כבוד ביתו
כי-לא במותו יקח-הכל
לא-ירד אחריו כבודו
כי-נפשו בחייו יברך
ויורך כי-תיטיב לך
תבוא ער-דור אבותיו
ער-נצח לא-יראו אור

אדם ביקר ולא-יבין } Refrain.
נמשל כבהמות נרמו }

This Psalm is clearly divided into two parts by the refrain. The first part has an introductory strophe, and then two strophes that have in parallelism the two strophes of the second part. It is common not to distinguish these two strophes and to treat the poem as if it had an introductory strophe of eight lines, and then two long strophes, each with a refrain. But it is easy to divide the second part into two strophes of eight lines, and these correspond in length with the introductory strophe. There are but two difficulties. The former is the absence of the refrain. But this difficulty is met by the opinion that here, as elsewhere, the scribe has omitted the refrain from the intermediate strophes. The principal difficulty is in the connection between the first line of the third strophe and the last line of the second strophe. It is common so to connect them that there can be no break in the sense. We agree, however, with Hitzig and Graetz in the opinion that a new sentence begins with **ויהי עור**. Bickell attaches these two words to the previous line, so that it becomes **וחרל לעולם ויהי-עור** and the first line of the strophe begins with

לנצח לא-יראה השחת

It seems to me that **ויהי עור** is the usual congratulatory wish, such as we found in Ps. xxii. 27, where, as here, the verb **אמר** is to be supplied. The clause

לא יראה השחת כי-יראה

reminds us of Isaiah xxvi. 11, in its contrast,

בל יחזיון יחזו ויבשו

The last line of the strophe is four-toned with **עלי**; we may reduce it by writing **על-ארמות**. However, Bickell thinks the text is corrupt and makes two lines

"שכחו אשר קראו
בשמותם עלי אדמות

He is followed by Cheyne. In this way he gains the line that he loses above. It would suit our arrangement just as well. The second part is difficult in the third, fourth and fifth lines. These are variously arranged by critics. Hupfeld, Bickell, Cheyne, and others, transpose lines four and six. This is the easiest way of overcoming the difficulty.

6) We have an example of strophes of ten lines in the Penitential Psalm LI.

I.

חנני אלהים כחסדך
כרב-רחמיך מחה פשעי
הרבה כבסני מעוני
ומני חטאתי טהרני
כי-פשעי אני אדע
וחטאתי נגדי תמיד
לך לברך חטאתי
והרע בעיניך עשיתי
למען תצדק ברברך
תזכה בשפטך

In this strophe we notice the constant recurrence of the ending in ' emphasizing in expression, as well as in the idea, the personal guilt of the Psalmist. In the ninth line we have an example of the attraction of ברברך into an unusual grammatical form by the parallel בשפטך. The strophe ends with a dimeter, which is not uncommon. But there seems to be no good reason for a dimeter in line four. Therefore we separate the preposition from the noun and read ומני the archaic form of the preposition.

II.

הן בעוון חוללתי
ובחטא יחמתני אמי
הן-אמת חפצת בטחות
ובסתם חכמה תודיעני
תחטאני באזוב ואטהר
תכבסני ומשלג אלבין
תשמיעני שישון ושמחה
תגלנה עצמות רכית
הסתר פניו מחטאי
וכל עונתי מחה

III.

לב-טהר ברא-לי אלהים
 ורוח-נכון חדש בקרבי
 אל תשליכני מלפניך
 ורוח-קדשך אל-תקח ממני
 חשיבה-לי ששון ישעך
 ורוח נדיבה תסמכני
 אלמדה פשעים דרכיך
 וחטאים אליך ישובו
 הצילני מדמים אלהי-תשועתי
 תרנן לשוני צדקתך

The second strophe is entirely plain. There is but one difficulty in the second strophe: **אלהים** makes the ninth line too long. It has been inserted by a later writer, probably from dittography.

IV.

ארני שפתי תפתח
 ופי יגיד תהלתך
 כי לא-תחפץ זבח
 ואתנה עולה לא-תרצה
 זבחי אלהים רוח-נשברה
 לב-נשבר ונרכה לא-תבזה
 היטיבה ברצונך את-ציון
 תבנה חומות ירושלם
 אז-תחפץ זבח-צדק וכליל
 אז-יעלו על-מזבחך פרים

This strophe has several difficulties in the Massoretic text. The rhythm is better if we attach **ואתנה** to the fourth line. The sixth line is too long if the divine name **אלהים** is retained. It is unnecessary. The poet would not have so lengthened his line without cause. The ninth line seems to have been enlarged by inserting **עולה** to explain the unusual **כליל** and make it correspond with line four. It is held by some that the last four lines are a later liturgical addition. But they are necessary to complete the strophe and are in entire accord with the rest of it. This theory of a later liturgical addition will not save the traditional theory expressed in the title that the Psalm is Davidic. Its doctrine is exilic, and the conclusion of the Psalm is in accordance with its historical situation.

7) Fine specimens of the strophes of twelve lines are given in that group of Psalms xcv.-c. We shall give the one strophe of Psalm c.

הריעו ליהוה כל-הארץ
עבדו את-יהוה בשמחה
באו לפניו ברננה
דעו כי-יהוה הוא אלהים
הוא עשנו ולו אנחנו
עמו וצאן מרעיתו
באו שעריו בתורה
באו חצרתיו בתהלה
הודו-לו ברכו שמו
כי-טוב יהוה
לעולם חסדו
ועד-דור ודור אמונתו

The eighth line is a dimeter, the verb באן should be inserted to make it a trimeter. There is no good reason for a dimeter line here. It would be natural for a scribe to omit the second באן which he would think unnecessary to the sense. The tenth and eleventh lines are dimeters in order to metrical pauses at the close of the lines, in order that the trimeter might close the piece with the more vigor.

8) There are many Hebrew trimeters that have strophes of fourteen lines. We shall give as an example four strophes from the great poem of the origin and early fortunes of our race preserved in the narratives of the Jehovist in the earlier chapters of Genesis. The story of Cain and Abel is given in four strophes:

I.

והאדם ידע אשתו
ותהר ותלד את-קין
ותאמר קניתי את-יהוה
ותספ ללדת את אחיו
ותקרא שמו את הבל
ויהי הבל רעה-צאן
וקין-היה עבד ארמה
ויהי מקץ ימים
ויבא קין ליהוה
מפרי הארמה מנחה

הבל הביא גם-הוא
מבכרות צאנו ומחלבהן
וישע אל-הבל ואל-מנחתו
ואל-קין ואל-מנחתו לא-שעה

The poem has been modified here and there by the Jehovist and the final redactor of the Pentateuch. But it is easy to trace his work and restore the poem to its original form. In the first line the editor has inserted the name **את חוה** as he did in the poem in the previous chapter. In the third line he has inserted **איש** in order, if possible, to prevent our taking **את יהוה** as the object of the verb. The style of this poem is to give the names of the children. Accordingly we insert the usual phrase **ותקרא שמו** in the fifth line. The poetic order requires us to transfer **ליהוה** from the end of the verse to the end of the previous line after **קין** in the ninth line. The editor has inserted **יהוה** in the thirteenth line. The parallelisms and the steady flow of the rhythm is manifest in the poem as we have given it above.

II.

ויחר לקין מאד
ויפלו פניו
ויאמר יהוה אל-קין
למה חרה לי
ולמה נפלו פניו
הלא אם-תטיב שאת
ואם לא תטיב
לפתח חטאת רבץ
ואליך תשוקתו
ואתה תשמלו בו
ויאמר קין אל-הבל
נלכה אלי השרה
ויהי בהיותם בשדה
ויקם-קין אל-הבל ויהרגהו

There are but few editorial changes here. The LXX. and Samaritan codex and most critics justify the insertion of the twelfth line **נלכה אלי השרה**. The editor has inserted **אחיו** in the last line to bring out more distinctly the idea of fratricide. There are two dimeters that seem to be designed, namely, in lines two and nine.

III.

ויאמר יהוה אל-קין
 אי הבל אחיך
 ויאמר לא ידעתי
 השמר אחי אנכי
 ויאמר מה עשית
 קול דמי אחיך
 צעקים אלי מן-האדמה
 ועתה ארור אתה
 גרשתיך מן האדמה
 אשר פצתה את-פיה
 לקחת את-דמי-אחיך מידך
 כי תעבד את-האדמה
 לא-תסת תת-כחה לך
 נע-ונד תהיה בארץ

The only editorial change in this strophe is the omission of גרשתיך in the ninth line. The use of it in the next strophe, line three, seems to require it here also.

IV.

ויאמר קין אל-יהוה
 גדול עוני מנשוא
 הן-גרשת אתי היום
 מעל פני האדמה
 ומני פניך אסתר
 והייתי נע-ונד בארץ
 והיה כל-מצאי יהרגני
 ויאמר לו יהוה
 לכן כל-הרג קין
 שבתים יקם
 וישם לקין אות
 לבלתי הכות אותו
 ויצא מלפני יהוה
 וישב בארץ נוד

In the fifth line it seems necessary to separate the preposition from the noun and write the archaic form מני. There is no reason for a dimeter here. The

tenth line is a natural dimeter. In the eleventh line it is better to strike out יהוה and in the thirteenth line קין as prosaic addition. It is not necessary to do this, because they may be combined with the verbs by Maqqeph, but it seems better to do so.

Thus, with a very few easy modifications that have been caused by editorial work, where the poetical character of the piece was lost sight of, the original poem stands before us with all its original beauty and power.

We have given a sufficient number of examples to illustrate the strophical organization of the trimeter poems. There are strophes of longer lines in the Psalter and the prophets, and in the historical books. The song of Moses, Deut. xxxii., is composed of three parts, and the scheme of the strophes in these parts is 12, 10, 10, 15, | 12, 10, 10, 10, | 10, 12, 15, 10, with a refrain of four lines. Proverbs viii.-ix. have the scheme 10, 12, 10, 10, | 10, 12, 10, | 12, 12, 12. Job. iii. has the scheme 20, 18, 14; Job. xxxi. has the scheme 8, 9, 8, 6, 6, 10, 10, 8, 12, 6. Job. xxxviii.-ix. has the scheme 8, 8, 8, | 6, 6, 6, 6, | 6, 6, 4, 6, | 7, 8, 8, | 8, 12, | 15, 10.

Psalm xlv. gives us an example of a bridal song in which the first strophe is six lines with its refrain, the second twelve lines with its refrain, and the third, twenty-four lines with its refrain.

Psalm lxxx. gives us two strophes of eight lines, the third strophe of sixteen lines, and the fourth strophe of eight lines. The third strophe has been doubled to embrace the allegory of the vine, and has a double refrain on that account.

We shall conclude with a specimen of responsive trimeters—Psalm xxiv. 1-6.

CHORUS.

ליהוה הארץ ומלואה
תבל וישבי בה
כי-הוא על-ימים יסדה
ועל נהרות יכוננה

QUESTION.

מי-יעלה בהר יהוה
ומי-יקום במקום קדשו

RESPONSE.

נקי כפים ובר-לבב
לא-נשא לשוא נפשו
ולא נשבע למרמה

יֵשׁא בִּרְכָה מֵאֵת־יְהוָה
וְצִדְקָה מֵאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעוֹ

CHORUS.

זֶה רוֹר דְּרִשְׁיוֹ
מִבְקֶשִׁי פִּנִּיךְ יַעֲקֹב

The **אִשֶּׁר** should be stricken out in second line of the response. Another specimen of such songs is found in xxiv. 7-10. See also Hosea xiv., Isaiah lxiii. 1-6, and Psalm xx.

These examples will be sufficient to illustrate the great variety of strophical organization that we find in Hebrew trimeter poems. In our next article we shall give some specimens of tetrameter poems.